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SUBJECT: FOUR YEARS ON, NIGERIEN NGO UP IN ARMS OVER NIGER  
URANIUM FOR SADDAM CLAIM

¶1. Apparently prompted by the execution of Saddam Hussein, on Sunday, January 7, a Nigerien NGO gave a press release denouncing the USG for its "false accusation against Niger for the sale of uranium to Iraq." The NGO, CODDAE - the "Collective for the Defense of Rights to Energy in Niger" - is managed by Moustapha Kadi Oumani, a leader of the civil society movement in Niger and an embassy contact on many issues. An electronic copy of this release (Pol FSN is on the organization's e-mail list) has been forwarded to Niger deskoff. The two page release has been covered in the backpages of one private weekly newspaper as of this writing, and may appear in others later in the week.

¶2. CODDAE, an umbrella organization of approximately 40 small NGOs, all of which have something to do with energy or uranium issues, demanded that President Tandja and the GON "involve themselves personally so that justice will be given to our dear country;" and informed readers that "CODDAE's lawyers are working to make a legal complaint against the USG to prove to the international community that Niger has never sold uranium to Iraq, but also to demand amends in the form of 1,000 billion CFA for the prejudice suffered." The release closed by noting that the case would "oppose the civil society of the world's poorest country to the richest country in the world."

¶3. For its part, the GON's own reaction to Saddam's execution was muted. An official GON statement by Daouda Diallo, President Tandja's spokesman, noted that "Niger deeply regrets the execution, particularly on the day of Arafat when God made sacred human blood" (an allusion to Eid). No GON contacts have ever raised the uranium sale issue with Ambassador or Emboffs.

¶4. COMMENT: This marks the first time in Poloff's memory that any Nigerien - Kadi included - has raised the subject of the pre-Iraq war USG uranium claims. The press release appears to be an attempt by Kadi and his colleagues to grab headlines and capitalize on the recent execution of Saddam. Periodically, finding themselves out of the limelight, Nigerien civil society organizations cast around for issues that might mobilize public opinion or get press. Most such efforts fail. The GON will likely take Kadi's actions for what they are - headline grabbing - and ignore the declaration. Since helping to organize demonstrations against a value added tax in the spring of 2005, he has not been a popular man with the GON.

¶5. The "1,000 billion CFA" (\$2 billion) claim for the "tarnished honor" of Niger, and the language employed throughout the document suggest its focus on domestic opinion and perhaps on a few left-wing European groups. NOTE: Kadi has recently been elected vice-president of a French human rights NGO, and may now feel that he enjoys a wider audience sympathetic to anti-American gestures on Iraq. END NOTE  
However, it seems unlikely that Nigerien public opinion will

be mobilized by a concern so abstracted from the daily lives and needs of this country's desperately poor population. Underscoring the bizarre nature of the entire affair, upon meeting Pol FSN at a wedding earlier this week, Moustapha Kadi expressed surprise that Emboffs had not contacted him regarding the release, but concluded the conversation by noting that "we will continue to work together." END COMMENT  
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